THRILLING STORY OF HAIG RETREAT

Illinois Officer Relates Experience of Hun Attack on the British.

TEN DIVISIONS AGAINST ONE

Despite Overwhelming Number of Enemy, His Losses Were Great—Miraculous Escape From Baptism of Shell Fire.

First Lieutenant Roswell T. Pettit, M. O.-R. C., of Ottawa, Ill., in a letter to his father, Dr. J. W. Pettit of the Ottawa tuberculosis colony, and published in the Chicago Tribune, relates the thrilling story of the great battle in Picardy. The American officer was in the thickest of the fighting for nine days, during the retreat of the British Fifth army from before St. Quentin. Lieutenant Pettit's account of the battle thrills with the stress of the conflict, as it was written immediately after he had passed through the tremendous experiences and before his impressions had been in any way dulled by time. His letter follows:

Lieutenant Pettit's Letter.

March 30.

Dear Father: Now that the show is over for me for the time being, and I have time to breathe and sleep and eat and write, I'll try and tell you about the battle. Before you receive this you will have had the whole story from the papers, but I know you will be interested in knowing what I did in the affair.

Of course, the things I saw were but an infinitesimal part of a gigantic whole and it would be impossible for me to give a correct description of the battle. And as I write this, I do it with no knowledge whatever of what has been going on even a few miles from me.

I have not seen a paper in eight days; I have received no mail, and the only information we have received has been by word of mouth, and most of what we hear must be wild rumors. For example: The French have advanced 20 miles at Verdun, the Americans have taken Ostend, and are on their way to Zeebrugge, and a great naval battle has been fought in the North sea.

All I know is that on this part of the front the Germans attacked us in overwhelming numbers, in places ten divisions to our one; that they suffered terrible losses, but finally broke through our lines of defense, one after another, and fighting for the most part, a rear guard action, we have retired about 15 miles in a straight line.

For a week before the battle started we had been expecting it; we were ready to move on 30 minutes' notice. I had been out with combatant as well as medical officers on tours of reconnaissance, definite methods of evacuation of the wounded had been worked out, and our plans of counter-attack been made. After four or five days of waiting, the storm finally broke.

The Boche opened up on us at 5 a. m., March 21, with the heaviest barrage I have ever heard. "Stand to," was sounded, we turned out dressed, and had all our equipment packed in 30 minutes. Then we sat down and waited for orders to move. The barrage kept up continuously, sometimes heavier and then of less intensity, sometimes it seemed to be to the north of us and then suddenly it switched to the south.

Our balloons were up as soon as it was light and the airplanes were buzzing over our heads. The ground mist gradually cleared and the Germans put a hail of shrapnel on our camp and we all took cover, but three men were hit. Why it is a fellow always feels safer with a roof over his head, even if he knows bullets and shrapnel and pieces of shell will go through boards and corrugated iron just like paper.

Ordered to Move.

Our orders to move finally came and we marched off to the brigade assembly point several miles away. This assembly point was in a little bunch of trees about the size of Allen park and behind and separated from a larger wood in front. In the larger wood there was a battery of heavy artillery and shells were dropping in there two or three to a minute, and it was heavy stuff, too.

Sometimes they overshot the big wood and shells were landing in the open around the little wood where my brigade had its assembly point. As we approached our little copse we could make all this out from some distance away and it wasn't a pleasant sensation to feel that we were marching straight into it.

All the battalions arrived and in that little copse there must have been at least two thousand men. What a chance if the Germans only knew! But the shells continued to drop in front of us and on either side, but none landed among us, and after waiting there for three hours, expecting to be blown to bits any second, we finally moved forward. Just as we left the copse, from behind us, up over a ridge, came a stream of galloping horses.

"It's the cavalry," someone shouted, but soon I made out limbers and field guns.

They galloped past us, going like mad, took up a position to our right, swung into position, unlimbered, and in two minutes were blazing away. It was a thrilling sight.

Torn by Shells.

In going forward we went around the end of the larger wood in front of us, over ground that was torn to bits by the heavy shell fire that had just preceded, over another edge, across a valley, and under the crest of a hill. And here we found the tanks going over the top of the hill to take up their position. At this point we were still about a mile from the front line.

At this place I opened up an aid post under the crest of the hill to take care of what wounded came in while we were getting into position.

Shrapnel was bursting in the air, shells were whizzing overhead, and our guns behind me were belching forth the fire. The noise was deafening.

A railroad ran through the valley and an engine pulling a couple of flat cars was going by. A couple of soldiers were sitting on the rear truck swinging their feet. A shell burst on the track and only missed the last car about fifteen yards. Neither man was hit and the train went blithely on.

By this time it was getting along toward evening, the sun was sinking in the west, and finally went down a great ball of fire. At the time, I remember, I noticed its color. It was blood red and had a sinister look. Was it my imagination, or might it have been a premonition? At any rate, I shall never forget the color of the sun as it set that night at the end of the first day of probably one of the greatest battles in history. It certainly didn't look good to me.

The drumming of the guns continued, twilight gradually deepened into night, the signalers stopped their wigwagging and took up their flash signals, a fog dropped down on us and put the lights out of business, and when we left to go forward under the cover of darkness they were busy putting out their telephone lines—signalers and runners don't have an easy time.

Shell Dump Goes Up.

Behind us a shell landed in an ammunition dump and it went up with a roar; then the rifle ammunition started going off like a great bunch of firecrackers, and great tongues of flame lit up the sky.

It is reported that the Germans had broken through our line and we were to counter-attack in the morning. We got into positions without a single casualty. I opened an aid post in an old dugout and settled down to sleep until morning. You may think it funny that one could sleep under such conditions, but I had been up since 5:30, had tramped about six or seven miles, had had a rather trying day and was dog tired.

Just like some of the warm days we get the last of March at home. In going forward it was necessary for us to march seventy-five yards in front of three batteries of field guns. There are six guns to a battery. They shoot an eighteen-pound shell and while we were there each gun was shooting twice to the minute. You can imagine the racket when I tell you that the discharge of one gun can be heard about four miles. In addition the Boche was trying to knock out this battery and he was dropping his six inch shells a little too close for comfort.

Nearly in a Trap.

Then I made a lovely mistake. I was to establish an aid post near battalion headquarters and went blithely on when I met a company commander and asked him where to go.

"Back there about a quarter of a mile," he replied. "This is the front center company. If you keep on in the direction you are going you are going up over that ridge and Fritz will be waiting for you with a machine gun."

So my sergeant and orderly and myself didn't waste any time in clearing. On the way back I found a gallon can full of water, got into a corrugated iron shelter and had a wash and a shave. It certainly felt good. I don't believe I had washed for thirty-six hours. It was warm and bright. I could look out of my shelter and see our support lines digging themselves in several hundred yards away. The cannon fire ceased, the machine guns settled down to an occasional fitful burst and it was midday of a beautiful spring day.

A couple of partridge flew over me. What did they know or care about all this noise and racket and men getting up in line and killing each other?

Along about three o'clock things began to liven up again. In the meantime headquarters had been established in a sunken road with banks about fifteen feet high on either side (later this cut was half filled with dead). My aid post was in a dugout near by and gradually things got hotter and hotter.

Our men had dug themselves in and were popping away with their rifles. The field batteries behind us were putting up a barrage, airplanes were circling overhead, both ours and the Germans'. The Germans put up a counter-barrage, the machine guns were going like mad. I was standing with the colonel on a little rise of ground above the sunken road when the Germans broke through about a mile to the north of us. They could be plainly seen pouring over the ridge in close formation.

Tanks Get Into Action.

Then the tanks came up, and you should have seen them run! Just like rabbits! The tanks retired, the Boches reformed and came at it again. They tell me that at certain places our men withstood fifteen successive attacks and that the Germans went down in thousands. One Welshman told me that his gun accounted for 75 in three minutes during one wave.

Machine-gun bullets were nipping around me, the shell fire was getting hotter, and even though it was a wonderful sight to watch I decided "discretion was the better part of valor," or something like that, and got down in my dugout.

I went back to the advanced dressing station through the hottest shell fire I ever experienced. More than once I went down on my face when a shell burst and the pieces went whizzing over my head. I spent the night in a mined village where the advanced dressing station was located, and all night they shelled it to blazes. It was remarkable how few casualties we had.

About eleven o'clock the morning of the third day a shell blew in the side of our post, but luckily no one was hurt. We stuck to it until about four in the afternoon, when we saw our men retiring over a ridge in front of us, keeping up a continuous machine gun and rifle fire, and we beat it back to another village and opened another post.

The Begrimed Lord.

About ten o'clock on the morning of the fourth day Lord Thyme, my colonel when I was with the battalion, stumbled into the shack where I was sitting. He looked like a ghost. He had lost his hat, his face was covered with a four days' beard, the sweat had traced tracks in the dust from his forehead to his chin. His sleeve was torn and bloody and he had a gash in his arm where he had been struck by a piece of flying shell case.

"My God, doc, are you here?" he said. "You got out just in time. The battalion is all gone. The sunken road is filled with dead—mostly Huns, damn 'em. The line broke on the right; we were surrounded, and at the last we were fighting back and back. Only thirty of us got away."

So we knew the Boche had broken through to our right and our left, and it was a question of how long it would be before we, too, were surrounded, but we wanted to stick it out as long as we could.

But not more than an hour later a medical officer rushed in from one of the battalions and between gasps for breath told us the Germans were on the edge of the village, had shot him through the sleeve with a machine gun bullet (luckily that was all), and for us to beat it.

Let me tell you we did. I threw my knapsack and made the first hundred yards in nothing flat and then settled down to a walk because I was so out of breath I couldn't run any more.

The incessant scream and crash and bang of the shells kept up and the rat-tat-tat of the machine guns never ceased. The village immediately behind us was a seething mass of brick dust, smoke, flame, and bursting shells. We were told on our way back that a stand was to be made behind this village, so we circled around it and took up a position about a half mile behind it at a cross-roads.

Unfortunately for us, a six inch battery came into action about fifty yards from us and, aside from the harassing effect of the terrific noise, batteries are always unpleasant neighbors, as they invite shell fire. We stopped here until about 10 o'clock at night, when we were ordered to retire.

There was no way of getting out the wounded that we had collected, so the stretcher bearers carried them on their stretchers for six or seven miles. In fact, we all helped, and when we arrived at our destination at 4 o'clock in the morning of the fifth day we were all in.

I could hardly move, but after two big bowls of hot tea and some hard tack I turned in on the floor and slept like a log for four hours, when we moved to another place and opened a dressing station.

Hun Plane Crashes.

On the way a German airplane came down and crashed near the road, but neither the pilot nor observer were hurt. They were a couple of rather neat looking lads about 19 years old.

And so it went for three days more, open a dressing station, retire (sometimes on the run), long marches, very little to eat except what we foraged from abandoned camps and dumps, dog tired, sleeping when and where we could, and finally the division was relieved. We now saw our first civilians, and last night I slept in a bed. It wasn't much of a bed, and the mattress was full of humps, but to get my boots off my sore and aching feet, to stretch out, and know I wouldn't be routed out in fifteen minutes—well, you couldn't have bought that bed from me for $100.

Did you ever read Robert W. Service's description of the retreat from Mons? Well, that's the way I felt:

Tramp, tramp, the grim road the road from Mons to Wipers;
I've 'ammered out this ditty with me bruised and bleading feet;
Tramp, tramp, the dim road—
We didn't 'ave no pipers—
All bellies that were 'oller was the drums we 'ad to beat.

The ninth day, sitting around the fire in our mess after the best dinner we had had in days, the commanding officer handed me some papers and said, "Here is something that will interest you, Pettit. I want to say we shall be sorry to lose you."

And this is what it was: "Lieut. Roswell T. Pettit, M. R. C., is relieved from duty with the British army and will proceed to the A. E. F., where he will report for duty."

I leave for Paris in the morning. This has been a long tale, but the half of it hasn't been told. I hope I haven't strung it out too much.

I have just been informed that all my kit had to be burned to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy. I shall probably want you to send me some things from home, but will see what I can get here first. Your son,

ROSWELL.

We Do Not Know What War Means

War Correspondent Declares Even Neutral Countries Feel It More Than We.

MUST MAKE EVERY SACRIFICE

To Win This War the American People Must Awaken to Full Realization of All It Means and All It Demands.

Chicago.—"We do not know that we are at war. Five thousand miles away our troops are moving into battle. In a million American homes, the casualty lists are watched with anxious eyes. Tears and anguish and heartbreaks are the price we must pay to write a headline of Victory," declared Oswald F. Schuette, for three years war correspondent of the Chicago News with the armies of the Central powers, in an address before the Press club of Chicago.

"A year ago we unfurled the battle flags of the republic. We pledged ourselves to the greatest sacrifice this greatest of world wars might demand. The American people are ready to make that sacrifice. But so far we do not know over here what war really is. I have come out of three years in that inferno. All Europe is aflame. It knows it is in the war. Even neutral countries such as Switzerland feel it a hundredfold more than we. There economy and conservation is no longer a master of preachment, of voluntary sacrifice. It is a matter of enforced necessity, of grim compulsion. They are not saving food to feed someone else. They are saving because they have too little themselves. And in the warring countries, there is war in every breath. War is a tragic reality for them. They do not need flags in the streets to remind them of the war—and you see few flags over there. War portions out their meager rations. War is their cook. War allots the comforts of their daily life, and the proportions are small. Luxuries are gone. War stalks through their streets with the soldiers in uniform. War's shadow is behind the mothers who pray in the churches that their boys may be saved.

"We hardly know these things. We are revelling in luxury, and call it war economy. We think we are saving, yet I have seen more food wasted in the two weeks since I landed in New York than in the three years of my war experiences.

"I do not say this as a complaint. I say it as a warning. We must learn quickly the great lessons of this war. For every day we wait now will cost us two later on. If we wait long enough, they will cost us weeks. To win this war, we must awaken to a full realization of all it means and all it demands. We must be in it, not one million strong, but one hundred millions strong. We must make economy not a fad or a principle, but a sacrifice.

"Five weeks ago, I was in General Pershing's headquarters in France, and saw our soldiers march out to unknown destinies in the trenches. Proudly they marched, knowing that they carried with them the hearts and the prayers of our great nation. Now it is up to us to show them that we are behind them. And we will do so.

"Don't be misled by any false tale that our enemy is collapsing, that Germany is on the verge of revolution, that her army is ready to mutiny, that her people are starving. We have believed too many such reports in the year that has past. Germany is not starving. She has been mighty hungry for three years. But Germany knows that she is in the war.

One Egg in Three Weeks.

"Shortly after the break of diplomatic relations a year ago, when I was still in Berlin for the Daily News, an American colleague, the Berlin representative of the Associated Press, contracted pneumonia. It was a critical case. The physicians said they could cure the pneumonia. But they said the patient would never recover. The Berlin food rations, they said, would not permit that. Patients such as he, they say, invariably died. That was the penalty of war. For it takes eggs and butter and milk and other unknown luxuries to bring a man back from the grave. At that time, the Berlin egg ration was about one every three weeks. Every three weeks, by the calendar, a coupon on the egg card would be validated to entitle the holder to purchase one egg from the grocer with whom his name had been registered. Often the groceries did not have eggs enough to fill even this scanty order. But we sent out an appeal to every available American to help. We mobilized every egg in the American colony in Berlin. We gathered all the butter we could find. We asked no questions when there seemed some doubt as to the strictness with which the "one egg every three weeks" regulation had been obeyed. But this patient had three delicious omelettes a day for three weeks. No one else in all the Central powers, not the kaiser nor Hindenburg, had reveled in any such luxury of eggs in three years of war. But it saved his life. It was the mobilization of the eggs, not the physicians, that did it."

GOVERNOR A KNITTER

The chief executive of Arizona, Gov. George W. P. Hunt, knits for the soldiers of his state during his leisure time. The governor is very proficient with the needles and already has turned over several sweaters and other comforts for the use of the state's drafted men. Recently, while en route to Washington for a conference with President Wilson, he knitted a six-foot scarf for a boy in khaki.

Woman Wins Rank of Chief Yeoman

Attains Highest Grade in Navy Open to One of Her Sex.

HAS DONE EFFICIENT WORK

Had an Important Part in Building Up Armed Guards' Organization—Now Keeps Records of This Service.

Washington.—The encounters of American merchant vessels with German submarines constitute one of the most thrilling chapters of the war. When the president ordered our merchantmen armed for protection against undersea attack the navy was called upon to furnish hundreds of guns and thousands of trained gunners to man them. To perform this task a new branch of the service was organized—the "armed guards." Even before this country declared war they were on active duty, and the first man of the navy to lose his life in service against the enemy was a member of the armed guards, John I. Eopolucci, lost in the sinking of the Aztec April 1, 1917.

One of the most efficient aids of Commander Farley in building up the armed guards organization was a young woman, Miss Helen E. Brooks, now confidential secretary to Lieutenant Commander Hall, who succeeded Commander Farley.

Shares in Big Events.

Miss Brooks has had a share in many of the most interesting incidents of the war. It was to her desk that the news came of the sinking of the Aztec and the Vacuum. She received the account of the sinking of the first German submarine by the Silver Shell; of the long battle of the Morent, which fought an enemy U-boat until almost the entire ship was in flames; of the four-hour fight of the J. L. Luckenbach which, though hit many times, refused to surrender. She made out the lists of the first men taken prisoner by Germany, members of the armed guard of the ill-fated Campana. She has transcribed many letters of commendation of men for heroic deeds, and many messages transmitting to relatives the sad news that a son, husband or brother has been killed or wounded.

The names, ratings and addresses of next of kin of all the members of the armed guards are kept on cards, in a separate envelope for each vessel.

The records of all those who lose their lives in the service of their country are kept in a special division. These constitute the navy's "roll of honor." Those who have been commended for heroic deeds also have a special place—and there are hundreds of them already, though we have been at war less than a year. The department seeks to secure and keep on file photographs of all the men of the navy killed in service against the enemy, and those specially commended. Miss Brooks has had a hand in building up these measures to perpetuate the memory of the navy's heroes and preserve interesting and authentic material for history.

Won Rapid Promotion.

Enlisting in the naval reserve in April, 1917, as a yeoman, third class, Miss Brooks has already risen to the highest rank open to women in the navy, that of chief yeoman. As secretary to Lieutenant Commander Hall she superintends the work of two yeoman stenographers and a mail clerk, all three of them men. Like all the other women yeomen, she is regularly enlisted in the navy—enlisted for the term of the war. At first they were commonly termed "yeowomen" and "yeomanettes," but these nicknames are frowned upon by naval officials, whose attitude has been well expressed by Rear Admiral McGowan, paymaster general of the navy: "They must not be called 'yeowomen' or 'yeomanettes.' These women are as much a part of the navy as the men who have enlisted. They do the same work and receive the same pay as men of the same rating. They are yeomen, and have done yeoman service in the immensely increased work imposed upon the navy by the war."

Chief Yeoman Brooks.

MARINES FORM THEIR FAMOUS SLOGAN

This remarkable photograph shows the words of their winning slogan formed by 800 marines in training for the battlefields. It took just seven minutes from the time the word of command was uttered until every man was in his place, forming the slogan "First to Fight" in living letters.

IGNORES DAYLIGHT SAVING

Maine Miller Probably Only Man in Country Not Affected by Change.

Kennebunkport, Me.—James D. Perkins, proprietor of a tidewater mill, is probably the only man in this country whose hours of labor were not affected by the new daylight saving plan.

The mill, located on the Mousam river, is operated by the tide. When it is full, Mr. Perkins closes gates and confines the water to a reservoir. As the tide ebbs he opens the gates to allow the water to escape into a sluiceway.

As the tide is about an hour later each day, Mr. Perkins cares nothing for clocks or the sun, or any other daylight saving plans. He is following the tide schedule, as he has for many years.

A Wisconsin inventor has patented skis with pivoted footpieces that send a veneer along over snow or ice as he presses his toes down against the runners.